

CHARACTERIZATION OF COAL LIQUEFACTION PRODUCTS BY
HIGH RESOLUTION-LOW VOLTAGE MASS SPECTROMETRY

By

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INTRODUCTION

High resolution mass spectroscopy is one of the most promising tools for the characterization of very complex materials. Since commercial instruments became available in the early nineteen sixties, the technique has been applied with considerable success to the analysis of materials derived both from petroleum and coal (1, 2, 3, 4).

This paper deals with the application of a particular approach, high resolution-low voltage mass spectrometry, coupled with computerized data acquisition and reduction, to the analysis of liquid and solid materials derived from coal liquefaction processes. These processes are of considerable industrial interest at the present; and the particular analytical approach used permits one to obtain routine quantitative or at least semiquantitative data on the hundreds of components present in each sample. Pilot plant or bench scale experiments can be thus supported with detailed analytical data.

EXPERIMENTAL

The high resolution-low voltage technique used, as well as the computerized data acquisition and reduction system, has been described elsewhere (5, 6, 7). In brief, mass spectra are obtained on an AEI model MS 9 instrument at a resolving power of approximately 1/10,000, and at low ionizing voltages, approximately 12 volts. This resolving power is sufficient to separate all significant mass multiplets up to about m/e 400, with exception of the $^{13}\text{CH}_\text{N}$ doublet, the separation of which requires additional calculations. At the same time, the use of low ionizing voltages reduces the spectra to essentially parent peaks and their ^{13}C isotopes, so that interferences between sample components are practically eliminated, and data can be obtained both on the compound type and carbon number distribution. Quantitative information is obtained by using pure compound or extrapolated calibration coefficients. The data acquisition system consists of an IBM Model 1802 computer, which converts the analog signals from the mass spectrometer to digital data and records these on magnetic tape. Subsequent calculations, including the recognition of peaks, calculation of peak areas, precise masses, formulas and, finally, the complete quantitative analysis, are carried out on an IBM Model 360/50 computer. At present, the quantitative analysis provides data routinely for up to 58 compound types and up to 2900 components, in less than three hours, including instrument time and interpretation. These types include hydrocarbons with formulas C_nH_{2n} to $\text{C}_n\text{H}_{2n-44}$, oxygenated compounds from $\text{C}_n\text{H}_{2n-20}$ to $\text{C}_n\text{H}_{2n-36}\text{O}$, and sulfur compounds from $\text{C}_n\text{H}_{2n-2}\text{S}$ to $\text{C}_n\text{H}_{2n-34}\text{S}$. Semiquantitative information on additional compound types, such as those containing N, or containing more than one heteroatom per molecule, or possessing a higher condensation than outlined above, can be obtained in a short additional time. The analysis is normalized to the volatile portion of each sample, determined by weighing the sample and any observed residue.

DISCUSSION

Application of the high resolution-low voltage method to coal liquefaction products yields a very detailed characterization. Isomeric hydrocarbon types, possessing the same general formula, but different aromatic nuclei, can be separated and determined at least semiquantitatively. The behavior of the components during processing can be closely followed. The analysis includes data on aromatic and heteroaromatic components ranging from ppm to several percent in concentration and from 78 to 500+ in molecular weight. A large number of components and compound types can be determined rapidly in each sample. The degree of sophistication attained is best illustrated with practical examples.

The ability of distinguishing isomeric hydrocarbon types is based on the observed fact that the concentrations of the aromatic nuclei are higher than those of the alkyl-substituted members in any homologous series. Thus maxima in the carbon number distribution in any series correspond in most cases to the appearance of an individual nucleus. A number of these nuclei are naphthenoaromatic compounds. Examination of samples hydrogenated to different extents can thus corroborate the presence of naphthenoaromatic nuclei, as the concentration of these increases with the extent of the hydrogenation. The data reported below will serve to illustrate the procedure.

Carbon Number Distribution in the C_nH_{2n-10} Series, Weight Percent

Formula	Mildly Hydrogenated Material	Severely Hydrogenated Material
C_9H_8	0.062	0.056
$C_{10}H_{10}$	0.220	0.408
$C_{11}H_{12}$	0.168	0.162
$C_{12}H_{14}$	0.444	0.926
$C_{13}H_{16}$	0.552	1.175
$C_{14}H_{18}$	0.702	1.493
$C_{15}H_{20}$	0.278	0.624
$C_{16}H_{22}$	0.314	0.443
$C_{17}H_{24}$	0.122	0.252
$C_{18}H_{26}$	0.006	0.088

The only reasonable structure for a C_9H_8 hydrocarbon is indene. $C_{10}H_{10}$ could be methyl-indene or dihydronaphthalene. As the total C_{10} concentration is higher than the C_9 concentration, dihydronaphthalene is believed to be the major component. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that this difference in concentration is enhanced in the more severely hydrogenated material, and dihydronaphthalene is an obvious hydrogenation product from naphthalene. Analogously, increases in concentration at C_{12} , C_{13} , C_{14} , and C_{16} , all enhanced in the severely hydrogenated material, indicate the presence of additional nuclei, respectively identified as tetrahydroacenaphthene, benzohydridane, octahydroanthracene and dodecahydropyrene. Data from other series of the same general formula are treated similarly. Only maxima or increases in concentration which appear at the same carbon number and series in a large number of samples are accepted as a genuine indication of more than one compound type in a given series.

As mentioned above, the concentration of alkyl-substituted components is considerably lower than that of the respective nuclei. This can be observed best in series and carbon number intervals where only one compound type is present, as shown below.

Carbon Number Distribution in the C_nH_{2n-8} Series, Weight Percent

<u>Formula</u>	<u>Mildly Hydrogenated Material</u>	<u>Severely Hydrogenated Material</u>
$C_{10}H_{12}$	5.804	9.180
$C_{11}H_{14}$	2.977	5.291
$C_{12}H_{16}$	1.805	2.671
$C_{13}H_{18}$	1.043	1.291

The decrease in concentration with increasing carbon number is approximately twofold. This rate of decrease has also been observed for other series, and in a large number of samples. We were able thus to develop a method to estimate the concentration of each isomeric compound type in a given series. The procedure, illustrated below, starts with extrapolating the concentrations of the homologs of the compound type with the lowest molecular weight nucleus. The concentration of the nucleus of the next compound type is obtained by subtracting the extrapolated concentration of the homolog of the first compound type at the carbon number involved from the concentration observed for the series. Concentrations of the homologs of the second compound type are then extrapolated; and the procedure continues similarly for all other compound types. The extrapolation is used, of course, only in carbon number intervals where more than one type is conceivably present. In addition, the method is applicable only to samples with boiling range wide enough to contain all isomers involved in the separation.

Separation of Isomeric Compound Types in the C_nH_{2n-14} Series, Weight Percent

<u>Formula</u>	<u>Total C_nH_{2n-14} Series</u>	<u>Acenaphthenes</u>	<u>Tetrahydro-anthracenes</u>	<u>Octahydronaphthalenes</u>
$C_{12}H_{10}$	2.954 ^(1,2)	2.954 ⁽²⁾	-	-
$C_{13}H_{12}$	1.894 ⁽²⁾	1.894 ⁽²⁾	-	-
$C_{14}H_{14}$	2.536 ^(1,2)	0.947 ⁽³⁾	1.589 ⁽⁴⁾	-
$C_{14}H_{16}$	1.105 ⁽²⁾	0.474 ⁽³⁾	0.631 ⁽⁴⁾	-
$C_{16}H_{18}$	1.146 ⁽¹⁾	0.237 ⁽³⁾	0.316 ⁽³⁾	0.593 ⁽⁴⁾
$C_{17}H_{20}$	0.631 ⁽²⁾	0.118 ⁽³⁾	0.158 ⁽³⁾	0.355 ⁽⁴⁾
$C_{18}H_{22}$	0.316 ⁽²⁾	0.059 ⁽³⁾	0.079 ⁽³⁾	0.178 ⁽⁴⁾

(1) Maxima in carbon number distribution, indicating the appearance of respectively, acenaphthene, tetrahydroanthracene and octahydronaphthalene.

(2) Raw concentrations.

(3) Concentrations obtained by extrapolation.

(4) Concentrations obtained by subtraction.

The information thus obtained on the concentration of the individual compound types can be used to follow their behavior upon hydrogenation. Typical data obtained are shown below.

<u>Ring Systems</u>	<u>Weight Percent</u>	
	<u>Mildly Hydrogenated Material</u>	<u>Severely Hydrogenated Material</u>
<u>Naphthalene System</u>		
Naphthalenes, C_nH_{2n-12}	14.2	7.9
Dihydronaphthalenes, C_nH_{2n-10}	0.5	0.7
Tetralins, C_nH_{2n-8}	11.5	18.4
Octahydronaphthalenes, C_nH_{2n-4}	0.3	0.4
Decalins, C_nH_{2n-2}	<u>2.0</u>	<u>2.6</u>
Total	28.5	30.0
<u>Anthracene System</u>		
Anthracenes, C_nH_{2n-18}	7.2	5.4
Tetrahydroanthracenes, C_nH_{2n-14}	3.0	3.8
Hexahydroanthracenes, C_nH_{2n-12}	1.3	1.5
Octahydroanthracenes, C_nH_{2n-10}	0.7	1.5
Decahydroanthracenes, C_nH_{2n-8}	<u>0.6</u>	<u>1.2</u>
Total	12.8	13.4
<u>Acenaphthene System</u>		
Acenaphthylenes, C_nH_{2n-16}	0.1	0.0
Acenaphthenes, C_nH_{2n-14}	6.6	5.3
Tetrahydroacenaphthenes, C_nH_{2n-10}	<u>0.7</u>	<u>1.7</u>
Total	7.4	7.0
<u>Fluorene System</u>		
Fluorenes	<u>5.0</u>	<u>5.0</u>
Total	5.0	5.0

Another aspect of the characterization of coal liquefaction products is the determination of components containing heteroatoms. Most of these can be directly identified from the computer output of the high resolution-low voltage spectra as illustrated below for typical mass multiplets.

Computer Identification of FormulasMultiplets at m/e 310 and 330

<u>Intensity, % Σ I</u>	<u>Measured Mass</u>	<u>Error, mmu</u>	<u>Formula</u>
0.0016	310.0857	+0.7	C ₁₉ H ₁₈ S ₂
0.0332	310.1346	-1.2	C ₂₃ H ₁₈ O
0.5825	310.1736	+1.5	C ₂₄ H ₂₂
0.0075	310.2276	-2.0	C ₂₂ H ₃₀ O
0.0435	310.2675	+1.5	C ₂₃ H ₃₄
0.0017	330.1360	-4.8	C ₂₆ H ₁₈
0.0064	330.1605	-1.5	C ₂₃ H ₂₂ O ₂
0.0131	330.1963	-2.1	C ₂₄ H ₂₆ O
0.1219	330.2360	+1.3	C ₂₅ H ₃₀
0.0051	330.3291	+0.5	C ₂₄ H ₄₂

The resolving power of our instrument, however, is insufficient to separate the ¹³CH-N doublet above m/e 120-130. Components containing one N atom are therefore detected using isotope correction techniques. The presence of N compounds of odd molecular weights is indicated by residual peakheights after isotope correction and shift in the measured mass from the value of the ¹³C isotope to that of the N compound, as shown in the example reported below.

<u>Measured Mass</u>	<u>Formula</u>	<u>Error, mmu</u>	<u>Intensity, % Σ I</u>
180.093	C ₁₄ H ₁₂	-0.6	1.903
181.090	-	-	0.845

<u>Formula</u>	<u>Theoretical Mass</u>	<u>Theoretical Intensity, % Σ I</u>
¹³ CC ₁₃ H ₁₂	181.096	0.290
C ₁₃ H ₁₁ N	181.089	0.555*

• Residual after isotope correction.

Theoretical mass for unresolved doublet:

$$\frac{(181.096 \times 0.290) + (181.089 \times 0.555)}{0.845} = 181.091$$

Error of mass calculation for unresolved doublet: -1.0 mmu (-0.4 with respect to 180.093).

The techniques discussed above result in a thorough characterization of coal liquefaction products. The wealth of data obtained is illustrated by the list of compound types detected in one individual sample, reported below.

<u>Series</u>	<u>Model Structure</u>	<u>Series</u>	<u>Model Structure</u>
C_nH_{2n}	Cyclohexanes	C_nH_{2n-20}	Naphthenoanthracenes
C_nH_{2n-2}	Decalins	C_nH_{2n-20}	Tetrahydrochrysenes
C_nH_{2n-2}	Hydrindans	C_nH_{2n-22}	Pyrenes
C_nH_{2n-4}	Hydrindenes	C_nH_{2n-22}	Hexahydrobenzopyrenes
C_nH_{2n-4}	Octahydronaphthalenes	C_nH_{2n-24}	Chrysenes
C_nH_{2n-4}	Perhydroanthracenes	C_nH_{2n-24}	Tetrahydrobenzopyrenes
C_nH_{2n-6}	Benzenes	C_nH_{2n-26}	Cholanthrenes
C_nH_{2n-8}	Indanes	C_nH_{2n-28}	Benzopyrenes
C_nH_{2n-8}	Tetralins	C_nH_{2n-30}	Picenes
C_nH_{2n-10}	Indenes	C_nH_{2n-32}	Anthanthrenes
C_nH_{2n-10}	Dihydronaphthalenes	C_nH_{2n-34}	Dibenzopyrenes
C_nH_{2n-10}	Tetrahydroacenaphthenes	C_nH_{2n-36}	Coronenes
C_nH_{2n-10}	Benzhydrindanes	C_nH_{2n-38}	Benzanththrenes
C_nH_{2n-10}	Octahydroanthracenes	C_nH_{2n-4S}	Thiophenes
C_nH_{2n-10}	Dodecahydropyrenes	C_nH_{2n-10S}	Benzothiophenes
C_nH_{2n-12}	Naphthalenes	C_nH_{2n-12S}	Naphthenobenzothiophenes
C_nH_{2n-14}	Acenaphthenes	C_nH_{2n-14S}	Indenothiophenes
C_nH_{2n-14}	Tetrahydroanthracenes	C_nH_{2n-16S}	Dibenzothiophenes
C_nH_{2n-16}	Acenaphthylenes	C_nH_{2n-18S}	Acenaphthenothiophenes
C_nH_{2n-16}	Fluorenes	C_nH_{2n-20S}	Fluorenethiophenes
C_nH_{2n-16}	Dihydroanthracenes	C_nH_{2n-2O}	Dihydrofurans
C_nH_{2n-16}	Hexahydropyrenes	C_nH_{2n-4O}	Furans
C_nH_{2n-18}	Anthracenes	C_nH_{2n-6O}	Phenols
C_nH_{2n-18}	Tetrahydropyrenes	C_nH_{2n-8O}	Naphthenophenols
C_nH_{2n-18}	Hexahydrochrysenes	C_nH_{2n-10O}	Benzofurans
C_nH_{2n-18}	Decahydrobenzopyrenes	C_nH_{2n-12O}	Naphthols
		C_nH_{2n-14O}	Naphthenonaphthols
		C_nH_{2n-16O}	Dibenzofurans
		C_nH_{2n-18O}	Hydroxyanthracenes
		C_nH_{2n-20O}	Hydroxynaphthoanthracenes
		C_nH_{2n-22O}	Hydroxypyrenes

$C_nH_{2n-24}O$	Hydroxychrysenes	$C_nH_{2n-6}O_2$	Dihydroxybenzenes
$C_nH_{2n-26}O$	Hydroxycholanthrenes	$C_nH_{2n-8}O_2$	Dihydroxyindanes
$C_nH_{2n-28}O$	Hydroxybenzopyrenes	$C_nH_{2n-10}O_2$	Hydroxybenzofurans
$C_nH_{2n-30}O$	Hydroxypicenes	$C_nH_{2n-12}O_2$	Dihydroxytetralins
$C_nH_{2n-32}O$	Hydroxyanthanthrenes	$C_nH_{2n-14}O_2$	Hydroxyindenofurans
$C_nH_{2n-38}O$	Hydroxybenzanthanthrenes	$C_nH_{2n-16}O_2$	Hydroxydibenzofurans
$C_nH_{2n-5}N$	Pyridines	$C_nH_{2n-18}O_2$	Dihydroxyanthracenes
$C_nH_{2n-7}N$	Naphthenopyridines	$C_nH_{2n-20}O_2$	Dihydroxynaphthoanthracenes
$C_nH_{2n-9}N$	Indoles	$C_nH_{2n-22}O_2$	Dihydroxypyrenes
$C_nH_{2n-11}N$	Quinolines	$C_nH_{2n-24}O_2$	Dihydroxychrysenes
$C_nH_{2n-13}N$	Naphthenoquinolines	$C_nH_{2n-26}O_2$	Dihydroxycholanthrenes
$C_nH_{2n-15}N$	Carbazoles	$C_nH_{2n-8}SO$	Hydroxycyclopenteno thiophenes
$C_nH_{2n-17}N$	Acridines	$C_nH_{2n-10}SO$	Hydroxybenzothiophenes
$C_nH_{2n-19}N$	Naphthenobenzoquinolines	$C_nH_{2n-12}SO$	Hydroxynaphthenobenzothiophenes
$C_nH_{2n-21}N$	Benzocarbazoles	$C_nH_{2n-16}SO$	Hydroxydibenzothiophenes
$C_nH_{2n-23}N$	Benzacridines	$C_nH_{2n-18}SO$	Hydroxynaphthenonaphthothiophenes
$C_nH_{2n-25}N$	Naphthenobenzacridines	$C_nH_{2n-20}SO$	Hydroxyfluoreno thiophenes
$C_nH_{2n-27}N$	-	$C_nH_{2n-16}O_3$	Dihydroxydibenzofurans
$C_nH_{2n-29}N$	-	$C_nH_{2n-10}SO_2$	Dihydroxybenzothiophenes
$C_nH_{2n-31}N$	-	$C_nH_{2n-16}SO_2$	Dihydroxydibenzothiophenes
		$C_nH_{2n-18}SO_2$	Dihydroxynaphthenonaphthothiophenes
		$C_nH_{2n-20}SO_2$	Dihydroxyfluoreno thiophenes

The model structures listed above were deduced by observing the molecular weight of the first member for each compound type in a large number of samples. This observed molecular weight was in most cases identical to that of the model structures proposed. As isomeric compound types of the same nuclear molecular weight, such as anthracenes and phenanthrenes, cannot be separated by mass spectrometric means, these structures should be considered only indicative.

Additional compound types have been of course detected in other samples. The most interesting among these were compounds as condensed as C_nH_{2n-48} , $C_nH_{2n-42}O$, $C_nH_{2n-34}O_2$, $C_nH_{2n-32}SO$, and several compound types containing NO, and S₂ groups.

The presence of O, O₂ groups, most probably in the hydroxyl form, is considered quite revealing, particularly in view of the fact that these hydroxyl groups are located on hydrocarbons containing up to 8 aromatic rings. The detection of these very condensed heterocompounds in coal liquefaction products corroborates the views on coal structure, reported by Hill (8). According to this and other authors, coal is viewed as a polymer composed of polycyclic nuclei linked by -O- and -S- bridges.

It is reasonable to expect that these linkages break upon hydrogenation, thus giving rise to the polycyclic phenols detected in our analyses.

Another interesting insight in the structure of coal is provided by the analysis of the heavier fractions (700°F.+) of hydrogenated material. As shown by the example reported below, these materials contain considerable amounts of polynuclear aromatics, associated with as many as a total of fifteen to twenty C atoms in side chains. It is conceivable, of course, that naphthoaromatic nuclei are also present. It is believed that these side chains are short, with one or two C atoms per side chain, although due to the insolubility of this type of material in any solvent, this assumption could not be confirmed by NMR techniques. These short side chains could be derived from hydrocracking of naphthoaromatic compounds or from hydrogenation of methylene linkages in the original coal structure.

Analysis of a Heavy Hydrogenated Fraction

<u>Compound Type</u>	<u>Weight Percent</u>	<u>Avg. MW</u>	<u>Compound Type</u>	<u>Weight Percent</u>	<u>Avg. MW</u>
C _n H _{2n-0}	0.033	308	C _n H _{2n-36}	0.147	379
C _n H _{2n-2}	0.077	129	C _n H _{2n-38}	0.072	386
C _n H _{2n-4}	0.254	185	C _n H _{2n-40}	0.013	410
C _n H _{2n-6}	0.298	102	C _n H _{2n-42}	0.015	415
C _n H _{2n-8}	0.792	153	C _n H _{2n-44}	0.002	400
C _n H _{2n-10}	1.675	195			
C _n H _{2n-12}	1.425	228	C _n H _{2n-4} S	0.004	126
C _n H _{2n-14}	2.196	236	C _n H _{2n-16} S	0.003	226
C _n H _{2n-16}	4.312	248	C _n H _{2n-18} S	0.002	231
C _n H _{2n-18}	5.743	270	C _n H _{2n-20} S	0.005	252
C _n H _{2n-20}	6.931	286	C _n H _{2n-10} O	0.006	203
C _n H _{2n-22}	7.628	282	C _n H _{2n-12} O	0.010	215
C _n H _{2n-24}	6.066	302	C _n H _{2n-14} O	0.013	178
C _n H _{2n-26}	4.407	322	C _n H _{2n-16} O	0.066	228
C _n H _{2n-28}	2.794	327	C _n H _{2n-18} O	0.163	240
C _n H _{2n-30}	1.393	340	C _n H _{2n-20} O	0.062	248
C _n H _{2n-32}	1.095	341	C _n H _{2n-22} O	0.093	264
C _n H _{2n-34}	0.378	365	C _n H _{2n-24} O	0.122	294

$C_n^{H_2}2n-26^O$	0.125	302	$C_n^{H_2}2n-32^O$	0.012	356
$C_n^{H_2}2n-28^O$	0.056	317	$C_n^{H_2}2n-34^O$	0.004	357
$C_n^{H_2}2n-30^O$	0.015	328			

Nonvolatile residue 51.50

Note: This is the routine format, which does not include O₂ or N compounds, and does not separate isomeric hydrocarbons.

Carbon Number Distribution in a Heavy Hydrogenated Fraction

Carbon Number	$C_n^{H_2}2n-22$	$C_n^{H_2}2n-28$	$C_n^{H_2}2n-32$	$C_n^{H_2}2n-38$
16	0.740	-	-	-
17	0.447	-	-	-
18	0.333	-	-	-
19	0.311	-	-	-
20	0.582	0.128	-	-
21	0.760	0.220	-	-
22	0.750	0.218	0.100	-
23	0.685	0.220	0.102	-
24	0.690	0.255	0.074	-
25	0.500	0.295	0.094	-
26	0.475	0.300	0.104	0.007
27	0.370	0.305	0.110	0.005
28	0.330	0.220	0.092	0.006
29	0.243	0.184	0.094	0.012
30	0.165	0.152	0.111	0.006
31	0.135	0.080	0.051	0.006
32	0.040	0.084	0.046	0.007
33	0.044	0.074	0.030	0.008
34	0.028	0.044	0.017	0.012
35	-	0.015	-	0.003
Total	7.628	2.794	1.025	0.072

CONCLUSION

High resolution-low voltage mass spectrometry is thus a very powerful tool for the characterization of coal liquefaction products and for yielding rapid and detailed data useful for process development studies. The method can also be applied to the volatile portions of powdered coal and coal extracts. The data obtained on a great many samples analyzed permitted us to gain some insight into the structure of coal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to thank Mr. G. R. Taylor and Mr. J. L. Taylor who obtained the experimental mass spectral data.

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